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ABSTRACT

In a conference convened to evolve new research approaches to the study of child development within the family, workgroups discussed emerging issues and priorities in research on children and families, information on children and families (needs and sources), and current methods and approaches in child development research. Workgroup I evaluated many approaches to family studies and assigned high priority to the study of care, continuity, and child identity functions of families. Workgroup II advocated the construction of a centralized archive or consortium of archives of data sets with facilities and staff for on-site use of data and support services; discussed the standardization of data set formats and the effect of theoretical perspective on data collection and presentation; and formulated a list of discussants' data needs. Workgroup III discussed the secondary analysis and synthesis of independent studies; cross disciplinary research on children and families; need for better techniques for generalization and prediction; balance between large and small scale studies; more encompassing evaluation of research projects; and more adequate conceptual models of child development which focus on the child's larger social context and its interactional outcomes. Also included: the text of the key note address (which explored the role of research in relation to welfare reform and suggested new directions for research), roundtable discussion, plenary session discussion and participants' names. (Author/RH)

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CHILD DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE FAMILY--
EVOLVING NEW RESEARCH APPROACHES

June 5-6, 1978

Proceedings of a Conference Sponsored by
the Interagency Panel on Early Childhood
Research and Development

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August 1978

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Introduction

During the past year, the members of the Interagency Panel on Early Childhood Research and Development have selected child development and the family as a theme around which to organize and concentrate their efforts to facilitate the coordination of research on children.¹ In coordinating agency activities relating to children and families, Panel members have emphasized a developmental/ecological model. That is, they have stressed the need to direct research questions toward the complex interrelations between the child and surrounding ecological systems such as the family, community, and culture, especially as these interrelations develop and change over time. Panel members have found the developmental/ecological emphasis particularly appropriate to their long-standing interests in research on the prevention of childhood disorders and problems, and in the identification of the strengths of children as they adapt to their own particular life circumstances. One outgrowth of the Panel members' consideration of developmental/ecological approaches (and also a reflection of the diversity of the Panel membership) is their recognition that a broader approach to child development research is necessary. That is, a greater diversity of disciplines, models, issues, methods, and data must be embraced by researchers in the years to come.

The Interagency Panel sponsored a conference, "Child Development within the Family—Evolving New Research Approaches," on June 5 and 6, 1978, in Washington, D.C. The purpose of the conference was to provide insight into the development of new and broader research approaches to child development and to aid the Panel in developing new perspectives for research planning and coordination.

The conference began with welcoming remarks by Harold C. Wallach, Chairperson of the Interagency Panel on Early Childhood Research and Development, and introductory remarks by Edith H. Grotberg, Chairperson, Executive Committee of the Interagency Panels. The keynote address was given by Henry Aaron, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, DHEW. Following the keynote

¹For a description of the Panel's theme, see Chapter II of the Early Childhood Panel's Seventh Annual Report, Toward Interagency Coordination: FY '77 Federal Research and Development on Early Childhood, Social Research Group, George Washington University, 1978.

address, all of the participants joined in a roundtable discussion of the general issue of evolving new approaches for research on children and families. In the afternoon of the 5th, three workgroups were held concurrently, dividing the general issue into the following subtopics: 1) emerging issues and priorities in research on children and families; 2) information on children and families--needs and sources; and 3) current methods and approaches in child development research. A final plenary session was held on the morning of the 6th.

Research and policy experts from Federal agencies, foundations, universities, and private institutions served as resource persons for the conference. They are listed at the beginning of each of the workgroup summaries, and in the appendix of this report. In addition to the resource persons, a large number of persons from the Interagency Panels, Federal agencies, universities, and other institutions attended the conference and participated in the discussions.

Keynote Address by Dr. Henry Aaron, Assistant Secretary
for Planning and Evaluation, Department of
Health Education and Welfare¹

It does not take very long, when one goes to work for the Executive Branch of the Federal government, to learn two basic facts about research. First, it generally has a marginal impact on decision-making. One tends to forget that while one is in the midst of the research process, because one dreams that a definitive finding will sweep the world. This seldom happens. Second, we are living through a period of very intense skepticism about the power of government to affect social or economic processes significantly, or to be more precise, to affect it in a predetermined way. There is a widespread view that government affects people's behavior in many ways, but rarely in ways that program designers originally intended. Periods of activism in the area of social or economic legislation are relatively rare, and periods of activism preceded by research or analysis are even rarer. Having started off with a dose of cold water, let me now say that research does play an important role as a subtle force that shapes points of view over the long range.

Today, I would like to discuss a few topics. One is the way in which research has been used to shape the Welfare Reform Proposal, and in relation to that, a research finding that has become somewhat controversial. I will also suggest a number of research topics that deserve attention. Finally, I will conclude with some observations about how one should present research results in order to increase their influence on public policy.

I will start with the role of research in relation to Welfare Reform. About 12 years ago, when I was working with the Council of Economic Advisors, a young graduate student from MIT named Heather Ross was promoting the idea, rather avant-garde at the time, that the government should launch a major experiment in which it would pay negative-income-tax benefits to low-income families. At about the same time, the Office of Economic Opportunity was trying to persuade the Johnson Administration that a negative

¹This is an edited, abbreviated version of Dr. Aaron's oral presentation.

income tax was the best way to provide assistance to low-income families. OEO and other government agencies involved failed to convince the Johnson Administration. But their efforts led to two accomplishments. One was formation of the Heineman Commission, which studied the problem and recommended a program very much like a negative income tax. The second was funding of a lengthy series of income maintenance experiments that have produced a steady stream of interesting and important results. The most dramatic of those results was the demonstration that an income maintenance program is feasible. Experimenters were able to set up a program, administer it, handle the paper, deal with the people and get them to comply with rules. At the outset, few people may have recognized that that would be an important finding, but, with hindsight many now do. Whether an income maintenance program is desirable or not is still a matter for discussion, but its feasibility is no longer an issue.

One of the original objectives of the experiments was to assess the impact of a negative income tax on the labor supplied by adults--both the primary and the secondary earners in a family. The experiments showed that the effects on primary earners were relatively small. The effects on secondary earners were somewhat larger. It was not found to be true that when people received cash assistance they left jobs, sat in their rocking chairs, or parked in front of their color TVs, at least, not in significant numbers.

In addition, sociologists and economists had lengthy lists of research questions that they wanted addressed. What was the effect of income maintenance on general consumption behavior? What happened to people's expenditures for housing? Was children's school performance significantly affected? In each of these areas, results were occasionally teased forth from the analyses. By and large, the news was that not a great deal happened. There seemed to be some small increases in school continuation rates, but not much change in actual school performance. The impact on consumption was that people did not seem to spend their new income foolishly.

Another subject that received continuing analysis from the very beginning was the impact of the experiments on family stability. This question was addressed in each of the experiments: the first, that took

place in New Jersey and Pennsylvania; the second in the rural areas of Iowa and North Carolina; the third, involving poor black urban families in Gary, Indiana; and finally, in the largest and most sophisticated of the experiments, the one now going on in Seattle and Denver.

In the Seattle-Denver experiment, a rather dramatic result appears to have emerged with respect to family stability. Specifically, analysis of data compiled for the first two years of the experiment indicates that those families receiving cash assistance under the terms offered in the experiment seem to break up a good deal more often than families in the control group. Control-group families are those that receive no cash assistance, except for a small bonus each month to insure that they report and fill out information forms. The results are statistically significant, and they do not go away with adjustment for possible biases. The magnitude of the effect is not trivial. In families receiving cash assistance, there is roughly a 60% increase in the rate of marital dissolution according to the Seattle-Denver analysts. I bring this subject up because on closer examination we may conclude--I am not saying we will--but we may conclude that for purposes of public policy, there is a lot less there than meets the eye.

Let me indicate some of the questions that remain unanswered and still need to be addressed and tell you why we need to be fairly cautious in interpreting the results. First of all, to the extent that comparisons can be made, the results are not entirely consistent with the analyses of the three other income maintenance experiments. Since each experiment was unique in certain respects, the results suggest that different types of comprehensive income maintenance programs may have different family stability impacts. Also, nonexperimental research on AFDC, particularly that which compares family patterns in states that do and do not participate in the unemployed parent program, yields mixed results on this question. In effect, we have another vote cast in an election where the previous votes are either abstentions or are fairly evenly divided on both sides of the question.

The second aspect of the results that has not received adequate attention is that the initial statistics do not draw a distinction between

families whose adult members are married or unmarried. At present, we have information only about when couples stop living together. From one standpoint the question of legal marriages is irrelevant--a breakup in either kind of family is much the same. From another standpoint it is important to learn whether the results apply equally to both kinds of families. Ultimately, we hope to have this information.

In addition, the results seem to apply to blacks and whites, but not to Chicanos. The patterns are somewhat different for blacks and whites. Throughout the analyses, efforts have been made to learn whether there are statistically significant differences between racial and ethnic groups. In some cases there have been. But I am puzzled as to why these results do not apply to one group when they do to the other two.

Another problem that has not yet been resolved is that there is some indication that with time, rates of dissolution among experimental families decline relative to those of control families. We need to look at the analysis over a long period to understand exactly what is happening. We also need to learn what impact cash assistance has on reconciliations and family formation. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we do not know whether the separations that occurred were beneficial or harmful to the families involved. What kinds of families broke up? Were they under extraordinary stress? How did the dissolution affect the family members' happiness, their ability to function well in school, in the labor market, and with each other?

Having said all these things, let me suggest perhaps the most basic reason why, for the purposes of welfare reform, there may be less here than meets the eye. A funny thing happened on the way from the income maintenance experiments to the Administration's policy recommendations for welfare reform: none of the plans proposed by the Administration, reported out by the Corman Subcommittee, and embodied in two major compromise bills--one supported by Congressman Ullman, and the other supported by a number of Senators, including Baker, Bellmon, Danforth, and Ribicoff--none of them offered income maintenance in the form in which it was tested in the experiments. All of them proposed programs that linked cash assistance, work requirements, and job creation. The jobs created were meant to make

work requirements more realistic and meaningful than they are under some current programs.

For policy making purposes, therefore, we need to know the impact on family stability of a program that links the reform and simplification of cash assistance to low-income families to a full-scale program of work requirements and job creation. How would that affect family stability? Regrettably, because policy usually tends to move faster than analysis, we do not know. We have to make decisions based on our judgment of the structure of proposed programs relative to the structure of existing programs; the idealized alternative dealt with in the experiments is really not going to play a part in the decision-making process, at least not at the present time. What we have is an example of very high-quality analysis that of necessity took a long period of time, produced a still tentative result that, at present, I would describe as anomalous and subject to considerable additional work, and that is off-target in relation to current public policy considerations. I am not suggesting that this is a typical situation, but that it has occurred in this case. The question of how our programs of assistance and job creation affect family stability is going to be an important issue in the months and years ahead and one that deserves analysis. It seems that concern about how our programs affect families and family stability is re-emerging (if it can be thought of as ever having receded.) It may be related in some way to the beginnings of a pro-natalist mentality that seems to be growing in the country. The concern goes to the roots of American values and belief in the family as a crucial social organization.

Let me turn now to suggest a number of topics that deserve analytical attention. Perhaps you already have some answers on the basis of your prior analysis. I would like to divide my suggestions into long-term research topics that of necessity require extended periods to complete, and topics for which short-term research or analysis of existing data may be possible. My first question is inspired by the sense that children are now growing up in very different kinds of families and are experiencing different kinds of parental care that are accepted widely socially. I am not suggesting that this situation is particularly new, but that the

degree of social acceptability, and hence normality, of very different family arrangements, and very different modes of parental behavior, is certainly greater than it has been in the past. Some children are cared for by parents, and some are in day care, a term that includes a wide variety of experience. The number of one-parent families is increasing. Many children live part of their lives in one-parent families, and part in two-parent families. Among two-parent families, the number in which both parents work outside the home during a substantial portion of their offsprings' childhood is increasing year by year. An increasing number of children live in families that receive some form of cash assistance or welfare. Many studies have looked at these situations to assess the impact of different family arrangements and different modes of parenting on child development, measured in a wide variety of ways. I only suggest that what is different now is the social acceptability, the normality, of the different approaches. It would be useful to take a long, hard look at the ways in which children grow up, and at the differences in child development in different types of families. It seems to me that a thorough study of that issue may require a large sample monitored over a long period of time. And that is expensive.

I would like to suggest another area in which research is needed, and I confess I am being far more speculative here. I am suspicious of people who say that the technological revolution has changed everything drastically. Nevertheless, it seems to me that in the area of education some important changes have occurred, brought on by the computer and microelectronics. For under \$800, one can now buy, for home use, computers with cathode ray tubes that give access to an almost infinite array of cassettes containing instructional materials. Prices have been coming down approximately 30% a year for many years. Instructional materials on a wide range and bewilderingly complex type of information are now coming within the economic range of a very large number of families in the United States. We do not really know how or whether these materials should be used by parents or schools to affect preschool child development or educational outcomes. I would simply like to suggest that this is an area that deserves attention.

In conclusion, let me list a few other smaller topics that are of particular interest to me. To return to my first topic, I would like to know a good deal more about the effects of income transfers and other programs the Federal government administers on marital stability and on family stability.

In the educational area, analyses have suggested that some findings that various educational programs do not affect children significantly may be due to the fact that a single program has very different results with different children. The same program may help some children and hurt others. Experienced teachers are good for some children, and are bad for others. At least some results point in that direction. We need to find out which methods work best for which children and how to identify the children in advance.

We are becoming very enthusiastic about preventive health care, because in a number of areas preventive health care has a very high, demonstrable cost-benefit ratio. I must confess that in a number of areas in which we thought preventive health care had a cost-benefit ratio, we have found that, in fact, it does not. It would be useful, particularly with respect to children, to know more about which kinds of preventive health care work best, and for which kinds of children.

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Having produced some analysis, and now being in a position of trying to use it and get other busy people to use it, I would like to offer, in closing, gratuitous advice about how to be more effective in getting people to know about your research so that it is more likely to affect policy. It is best to assume that you are writing for people who have three characteristics: they are ignorant with respect to the subject you are addressing, they are busy, and they are tired. You should, therefore, stress simplicity and basics. Simplify and stress even what seems obvious, because there is a good chance that it may have slipped the mind of the busy or tired person you are trying to persuade. Facts that seem to you to be basic and natural and known to one and all, may just not be known by the people you are trying to persuade. I am not saying that those you are trying to influence are ignorant, busy, and tired out of any sense of superiority. Shortly after taking my job, I got busy; not long after that I got tired, and every day I am feeling more and more ignorant.

Thank you very much.

Monday Morning Roundtable Discussion

Moderators: Edith H. Grotberg and Harold C. Wallach

Following Dr. Aaron's address, Dr. Pearl raised the issue of ethics in research involving human subjects. What kinds of ethical problems are involved in social experiments such as the negative income tax programs? If such experimental programs do indeed cause higher rates of divorce, are they unethical? In response, Dr. Aaron acknowledged that the protection of human subjects in social research was an important issue, and concurred that thorough attention should be given to procedures for insuring adequate protection with regard to all kinds of risks, whether they relate to physical or psychological injury, or to financial factors. He added, however, that the necessary safeguards had been taken in the negative income tax experiments. The people involved had been provided adequate information about the nature of the treatment, the terms under which they would be receiving it, the period of time during which they would be receiving it, and the people had been given the choice to participate or not to participate.

Dr. Zill and Dr. Kovar pointed out that we often worry about the negative impact of new programs and policies on family stability and functioning, but overlook the negative effects of current policies on children and families. We do not always accurately assess the status quo. With regard to family stability, for instance, the traditional two-parent family is not the status quo for large segments of the population. We should try not to be tied too closely to traditional options when considering policy for the future, these participants argued. Dr. Kovar added that we have very little hard evidence that living in a single-parent family is bad for the child, with the exception that the low level of income characteristic of single-parent families is clearly disadvantageous. Another participant countered, however, that some clinicians would argue that having only one parent can be damaging to a child, but that researchers have had difficulty demonstrating the damage because they have not been able to quantify the indicators.

Dr. Lichtman focused on the issue of societal change, suggesting that we must not only investigate changes in families and other institutions over

time, but also examine changes in values and assumptions that shape our research questions and paradigms. How did we acquire the values that we apply in designing research and policy?

Dr. Glick underscored the complexity of issues relating to values. For instance, it is too simplistic to ask whether divorce is good or bad for the family. A divorce may be beneficial for one member of the family, but not for the other. Many variables have to be taken into account in analyzing such situations.

One of the participants asked Dr. Aaron if he was not being defensive about the results of the negative income tax experiments. If this is indeed the impact of negative income tax on family stability, why cannot we just accept it, instead of trying to defuse the findings, out of anxiety. Dr. Aaron replied that he meant to convey skepticism rather than anxiety. Indeed, the finding may hold up across future studies, and we can conclude that we have learned something new. On the other hand, this one finding, despite its statistical significance, runs counter to prior expectations and prior research findings, and leaves many questions unanswered. Our complete acceptance of this finding should be held in abeyance until other questions can be answered and further checking completed. Dr. Gordon took this line further, and pointed out that our inquiries have to go beyond just the validity of a finding, to the meaning of that finding. He argued that researchers need to put greater effort into thinking about the meaning of their research strategies and findings.

Dr. Steiner pointed out a parallel between the discussion of the impact of negative income tax on family stability, and the literature on the impact of Head Start on children's development. The early Westinghouse study disappointed those who expected to see children make substantial gains after their Head Start experiences, but over a number of years researchers and evaluators were able to demonstrate more positive effects of the program. Will a similar scenario unfold with regard to negative income tax and family stability?

Dr. Grotberg raised the issue of secondary and tertiary analyses of data, pointing out that through such analyses, policy-makers can be provided some guidance which is less closely tied to the assumptions and values involved

in the original research. Drs. Lazar, Dokecki, and Shipman responded to this suggestion. Dr. Lazar argued that policy-makers often want the data before they can be collected in a reasonable way. Children grow one year at a time, and many answers can be obtained only over long periods of time. In addition, we often ask the wrong research questions at the wrong time. Another common problem we have as researchers is that we become slaves to particular methodologies, and use them where they are inappropriate simply because they are the methods with which we feel most comfortable. Consequently, we end up missing important information, or ignoring information because it does not meet the criteria set by our methodology. Dr. Dokecki stressed the need to analyze and integrate existing data and information, in order to make them more useful for public policy-making. In addition, he advised that the researcher approach research with a user in mind. Dr. Shipman also advised that we must be wary of letting our models and methodologies interfere with our search for information about what is really happening to children, families, and communities as a result of our programs and policies. She emphasized the need for transactional models and approaches that can deal with the complex interrelationships that occur in any ecological setting.

Dr. Zill argued that there is a need for further standardization of methods, so that greater comparability across studies can be achieved. He acknowledged that this course of action might run counter to many of the suggestions made earlier in the discussion. Along similar lines, he felt that we needed to be more precise in defining and classifying families. In his own work, for instance, he has found large differences in the self-reported mental health of single-parent families involving mothers who have been divorced, and mothers who have never married. Similarly, different outcomes may be measured in children living in two-parent families, depending on whether the families involve a step-father and a mother, or a step-mother and a father.

Dr. Pearl repeated Dr. Aaron's contention that research and policy are only tenuously related, and cautioned that researchers are bound to be frustrated if they expect that policy actions will be based directly on their research data or conclusions. A more realistic view, he suggested, is that research findings which hold up over the long term, will gradually and

indirectly shape the thinking that goes into policy decisions.

Dr. Estrada suggested that one of the reasons policy-makers cannot use research information is that the information is incomplete. Too much of our research is descriptive and focused on simple differences between groups. The interpretation of these differences generally is left to the policy-makers, who in turn cannot help but apply their own values and assumptions in reaching conclusions about the meaning of the research findings. Mr. Estrada argued that we should undertake more explanatory research, in order to provide more guidance to policy-makers.

Dr. Kovar pointed out that the Federal agencies themselves are at fault in not making the results of research more available to potential consumers. She suggested that agencies at least disseminate up-to-date lists of publications based on research which they had funded.

The discussion shifted back to the issue of the adequacy of our models, approaches, and tools in examining complex phenomena. Dr. Dokecki endorsed the Panel's emphasis on developmental/ecological approaches. He argued that most research studies have been restricted to main effect models or simple interactional models. Instead, we need to employ transactional models which can deal with the complex, dynamic interrelationships between children, members of their families, the immediate environments beyond the family, and the larger social systems encompassing those environments. Dr. Dokecki suggested that the field of child development is on the verge of a breakthrough in this respect, but that there are still tremendous challenges to be faced. For instance, our analytic models are not adequate for such transactional conceptualizations. Furthermore, any problems researchers now have in trying to communicate their findings to policy-makers are likely to be exacerbated when they try to convey conclusions based on complex, transactional analyses.

Dr. Zill disagreed with one aspect of this argument, contending that we have powerful statistical tools, such as path analysis and correlational analysis, which can be used effectively with complex research models. Our greatest need is for large sets of data collected with comparable measures. Too much of our research is carried out in small, independent studies, which lack comparability.

Returning to the relationship between research and policy, Dr. Lichtman agreed that policy makers frequently act according to their own notions of what constitutes equity, say, or proper upbringing, regardless of what any research data may say. In other words, the values and assumptions of the policy makers are not generally affected by research findings. It will be worthwhile, then, to undertake research on the basic values, ideas, and notions that shape policy decisions. Dr. Brown followed up this suggestion with the observation that researchers should concentrate on asking better questions, and not spend all of their energy on obtaining answers to questions which, in many cases, were not thoroughly examined in the first place.

One participant asked that the issue of translating research findings into public policy be considered in the context of the Head Start program. Can the complexity of the research and evaluation findings be boiled down so that simple straight-forward answers about the program's effectiveness can be provided for the public? Another participant responded that we can say, at this point, that low-income children who have participated in cognitively oriented preschool programs are less likely to wind up in remedial classes, are less likely to be held back a grade, and apparently are less likely to drop out of school. Dr. McHale argued that we could not give a simple yes-or-no answer to the question: Does Head Start work? We should try to give an articulate and simple explanation of the research findings, but also point out all of the caveats of which we are aware, and the gaps between the findings and the policy decisions with which we are faced. In addition, we should identify the areas where we lack answers or understanding. Dr. McHale observed that over the years we have asked different questions about Head Start. We used to ask about the program's effects on IQ, rather than school performance. Now, we are interested also in the program's effects on health care for the child, and effects on the parents. Does Head Start bring about any long-term changes in the family's well-being? There are many people in government and in the research community who no longer think of preschool intervention as a primarily educational intervention, reflecting this long-term change in the discourse about programs such as Head Start.

Dr. Zill observed that we have had to conclude that Head Start did not work in the way that many had originally hoped it would work. An intervention

in a relatively small portion of a child's life did not substantially boost his IQ and change his developmental course dramatically. He added that some of the changes originally looked for in the Head Start effort have been found, in Sandra Scarr's research, to occur as a result of interracial adoption. The implication of this research is that massive intervention, such as changing a child's entire family situation, may be required to produce the kinds of effects some people are looking for. Dr. Darlington pointed out, however, that the oldest of the children being followed in early intervention studies are just now entering college or the job market, so that we do not know what effects the intervention programs will have on performance at these levels. Dr. Zill acknowledged this, but said that changes that have shown up thus far have been quite small. Dr. Darlington replied that there were big differences between experimental children and control children in the extent to which they were referred to remedial education programs.

At this point, Mr. Wallach asked if there were any reactions to Dr. Aaron's earlier recommendations for future research. Dr. Darlington responded to the suggestion that we need more research on the use of computers in education, and argued that "there may be less here than meets the eye." He related his own experiences in trying to develop interactive instructional materials for an undergraduate statistics course. After first considering the use of computers, they concluded that they could develop workbooks which the students could use in an interactive way, eliminating the need for computer assistance. Dr. Darlington advised that more can be done with just pencil, paper, and the printed page than many people realize.

Dr. Lichtman suggested some historical topics for research in the child and family area. First, he recommended an historical study of forms of governmental intervention in the family. He suggested that many people regard such governmental intervention as a relatively recent phenomenon, but that it actually dates back to the earliest settlements in North America. Different kinds of intervention in family life need to be examined, including efforts to control morality, for instance through policies regarding birth control and abortion. Dr. Lichtman also recommended that attention be given to the history of the family's relationship with other institutions in society, such as day care centers and old age homes. By studying the historical

development of the involvement of such institutions in family life, we might improve our ability to predict and understand the consequences of policy decisions in these areas.

Dr. Lichtman suggested that we undertake an historical study of factors which put families at risk, with regard to health and financial well-being, for instance. How have such risks changed over the years? Finally, he recommended an historical analysis of the meaning of the family, which might include a study of the historical development of alternative family forms, and an examination of historical changes in family concepts such as childhood, middle age, and parenting.

Dr. Steiner pointed out that most of the research topics suggested during the discussion were based on problems currently facing policy-makers. By the time we get findings from any research undertaken in these areas, most of the policy and legislative decisions will have been made. It would be better, consequently, to try to identify issues that are likely to be preoccupying Congress some years from now. Dr. Drage also urged that we try to perceive future policy needs as we collect data on children and families. He suggested that one issue which is likely to become important in the future concerns the decision by an increasingly large number of families not to have any children at all.

Dr. Grotberg observed that in addition to identifying areas where research data are needed, we have to identify areas where data are available but not being used. She offered as an example, research on poverty which has shown that many people do not stay in poverty permanently, or for long periods of time, but rather move in and out of it. Nevertheless, many policy-makers, service providers, and researchers design their efforts as if the population groups in poverty were stable, and they generalize inappropriately from studies of particular groups of families who have poverty-level incomes at particular points in time. Researchers and policy-makers need to consider the implications of findings such as these. For instance, in developing policies relating to developmental disabilities, it may be more appropriate to address particular risk situations, than particular income levels. It may be helpful to look at studies in European countries which have a universalistic approach to services, rather than the particularistic approach which we have in the United States.

Dr. Brown pointed out that there were other audiences and consumers of research findings that should be considered in addition to policy-makers, such as doctors, psychologists, teachers, and families. What are their informational needs? He cautioned that we should keep in mind the general question, "How can research serve the country best?" and not focus exclusively on one group. Dr. Zill agreed with this suggestion, and argued that research findings have gradually permeated the attitudes, and practices of the public, introduced primarily through the mass media. During the past several decades, many research findings have gradually shaped child rearing, parenting, and family practices, even though they had no immediate impact on policy. Dr. Zill suggested that we concentrate on doing good science, and not on developing answers for policy-makers--if the research is good, the findings will eventually get through to those that need them. In addition, he argued that it is not necessary to search for "new" research issues, since many of the "old" issues are important and have not been resolved. For instance, in many studies, a parent's level of education and income has turned out to be a powerful predictor of a variety of child outcomes. We still do not understand what is involved in this relationship. When big differences are found between the children of high school graduates and high school dropouts, are they due to the extra year of education, or something else?

The morning session ended with a caution from one of the participants that we not let the interaction between researchers and policy-makers degenerate into mutual criticism about the way each other operates. Rather, we should search for a level of analysis in which each can engage effectively.

Workgroup I. Emerging Issues and Priorities
in Research on Children and Families

Chairpersons

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Resource Persons

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Oliver Moles
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Gil Steiner
Brookings Institution

Dr. Datta asked the resource persons and other workgroup participants to address two major questions during the afternoon. First, which research areas and questions should have lowest priority in the future? More specifically, in which areas of research have we accumulated enough sound information that further research is not warranted, given that our funds are limited? Second, which research areas and questions should have the highest priority in the future?

A lengthy discussion ensued, concerning areas which might be eliminated from future research agenda. This discussion followed two general courses. On the one hand, participants suggested specific areas where further research may not be necessary, although there was disagreement in the group over the adequacy of prior research in each of the areas suggested. On the other hand, there also was considerable discussion of the general problems involved in trying to eliminate any areas from future research agenda.

The first of the specific suggestions concerned research on ethnic or social comparisons. Dr. Gordon observed that we know we can find differences between ethnic groups with regard to many factors, such as their social circumstances, their language, and their life conditions. Further demonstrations of such differences are not necessary. In addition, he argued that if we are looking for information that will help us develop effective services

and intervention programs for people in need, we should look for functional differences, which are likely to cut across ethnic groups, not status differences.

Along similar lines, another participant suggested that we dispense with simple comparisons of different types of family structures, such as one-parent families and two-parent families. Even if they show consistent differences between family types in their effects on child development, which is unlikely, superficial comparisons will not shed light on the important processes which mediate family structure and child development. Rather than study the effects of the number of parents present in the home, it was suggested, it may be more worthwhile to focus research on the number of primary caring adults present in the child's environment. It may be that the number of caring adults with whom children can interact is more important than whether the children are from one-parent or two-parent families.

Dr. Press questioned the value of studies which look for effects of day care on very young children. More specifically, she raised the issue of the policy implications of such studies, especially if they were to reveal negative effects on children's development. Given the strong social/political pressures for day care and the need for day care for the children of mothers who work out of necessity, would it serve any purpose to demonstrate any negative aspects of day care?

It was suggested that a common denominator of these recommendations was to avoid research studies whose findings were likely to "hurt" certain groups of people. Another participant disagreed, arguing that the recommendations did not imply that we should avoid research which would hurt people's feelings, but rather that we should avoid research on factors about which people can do nothing. It is impossible for people to change their ethnicity, and difficult for people to alter their family structure. However, Dr. Gordon, who originally had raised the issue of ethnic differences, indicated that he had not suggested that we stop studying status conditions simply because they cannot be changed. In some cases, it may be worthwhile to study status conditions in order to determine ways in which society needs to be changed to adapt to those status conditions. On the other hand, we have studied ethnic differences for some time now, and we do not have a great need for additional information on them.

Dr. Moles added that we do not need further studies which simply document differences between people at different income levels. Again, we need research which instead examines the intervening variables between various outcome measures and levels of income.

Dr. Pearl suggested that research has demonstrated that television can have an effect on children, and additional research is not needed simply to establish this point. We do need more research, however, which examines the ways in which television affects the child's attitudes and behavior.

Dr. McHale observed that the general short-term effects of early intervention programs have been well documented, although we need to learn considerably more about the effectiveness of different strategies for different groups of children, at different cost levels, etc. We need similar kinds of information about the long-term effects of intervention, with regard to which our knowledge base is even more limited.

The next issue raised was early contact between the mother and the infant. According to Dr. Pearl, a number of studies have demonstrated the necessity of early contact between mother and infant for the development of a strong bond between the two, and further research demonstrating this general effect is unnecessary. He added, however, that we do not know very much about the mediating factors in the bonding process, or the circumstances in which mother-infant relationships can be modified, or the impact of day care on the bonding process. These are but a few of the unanswered questions concerning early mother-infant contact. The other participants questioned the degree to which we understand many other aspects of the parent-infant bonding process. How much contact between mother and infant is necessary? How soon after birth must contact occur? How many mother-infant dyads fail to experience the conditions necessary for strong bonding? If contact during the hour immediately following birth is so critical for the subsequent mother-infant bond, as some researchers have suggested, does this mean that most of the children in the country do not have adequate relationships with their mothers? Dr. Gordon argued that none of the previous research studies has demonstrated that early contact must be with the mother, or a natural parent; the same bond may be possible between the infant and any person who assumes the parenting role.

Participants identified two final areas where further research is unnecessary. We do not need additional studies to show that pregnancy during the teenage years generally has negative effects on the mother and her infant. Similarly, we do not need additional research to demonstrate that good prenatal care and nutrition during pregnancy can prevent subsequent problems during delivery and early childhood.

Throughout and following these specific suggestions, the participants discussed problems in trying to conclude that sufficient research has been completed in any one area. Dr. Pearl argued that even in areas where we are most confident that we have a firm knowledge base, we may be heavily influenced by the assumptions of previous researchers. In any area it may pay to re-examine carefully the research which provided the basis for our current thinking. We need to determine if we truly understand how our knowledge was derived and to assess the limits of that knowledge. In many cases, we will find that while we assume we know what is going on, we actually do not. Consequently, it is inadvisable to identify an area as no longer in need of research or examination. There was considerable agreement among the participants that it made more sense to eliminate specific methods and research approaches from our future efforts, rather than specific areas or issues. For instance, in the case of ethnic and socioeconomic differences, participants argued that we should not abandon all research, but merely certain superficial, comparative approaches to research in these areas. Many thought that in judging the adequacy of previous research efforts, a critical factor was whether the research was descriptive or explanatory. Participants contended that in most of the areas identified during the discussion, we need no further descriptive studies, but do need research on important process variables. Indeed, one person took this argument one step further and stated that it was especially in those areas where we have firm descriptive information that we need to follow up with additional process-oriented research.

Another factor which should be considered when judging whether research in an area has been sufficient is the potential for action based on the knowledge generated by that research. Is the information sufficiently sound, clear, and consistent to allow action to be taken, whether this be in the form of social policy decisions, or the design of further research? For instance,

even though we know children need good nutrition and care, it is not easy to establish minimal standards in these areas.

Finally, Dr. Steiner stated that he would not rule out any research area or method, until he had found out who was going to do the research and how it would be done. The ability and imagination of the researcher, he added, are more important than the area of the research.

At this point, the discussants took up the second of the general questions--given limited funds, which research issues should have highest priority? During the discussion which followed, the focus was on family structure and functioning. Specific suggestions fell into three categories, which varied in level of generality.

The first, and most general, question concerned three features of family functioning, identified by Dr. Gordon--care, continuity, and reference. What are the extent, pattern, and sources of these three functions, and what are their chief impediments? (The term "reference" pertains to the development of the child's sense of identity with a reference group.) What are the factors that contribute to good care, continuity, and reference?

At the second level of generality were questions about the meaning of "the family" today. What do we consider to be a family? What is the ideal family? Participants agreed that we had to look at the dynamics of different kinds of families, with different life styles, that foster wholesomeness of family life and child development. Some of those present argued that researchers should make a greater effort to recognize the diversity of families, especially when they report their findings or make recommendations to the general public. There was some criticism of a recent book which urged mothers to stop doing things that prevented them from spending substantial portions of their time with their young children. Many mothers must work, and rather than make them feel guilty about their circumstances, it was argued, researchers should help them sort out the different options of child care available to them.

The discussant pointed out that similar questions about work and family involvement could be asked with regard to fathers. Dr. Gordon advised that researchers not be preoccupied with the natural mother, but focus more generally on the "parenting one"--a person with a long-term, deep emotional relationship with the child. Dr. Datta observed that research had shown that

maternal employment per se does not have deleterious effects on children, and that it can be worse for children to live with two parents in conflict than with one divorced parent. These research findings have had an impact on people, and have helped them change their life styles without feeling guilty.

At a third level of generality, more specific questions were raised concerning alternate patterns of child care, changes in parental roles, and differences in family structure. We need research on how families use different kinds of child care arrangements, and how their family functioning is affected by these choices. We need research, especially process-oriented, transactional research, on the relationship between family size and spacing, and family functioning and child development. In addition, we need to look at the changing roles of family members--mothers, fathers, other caring ones, and children. We need to look at families where both parents share equally the responsibility for childrearing and family functioning. Furthermore, researchers should examine not just parent-child relationships, but also other kinds of relationships, such as parent-grandparent relationships, and sibling relationships. Dr. Datta pointed out that research has shown that a large proportion of people over 65 years of age live within 75 miles of at least one of their children.

Interest was expressed in studies more accurately assessing the incidence of child abuse in the country, and the incidence of drug or alcohol problems in childhood. One person suggested that we particularly needed research on patterns of interaction between the adults present in the home of the abused child, and research on the degree to which abusing families are socially isolated or lack support from institutions outside the family. The need for research on support systems was stressed by several discussants, who identified three kinds of systems. First, researchers should examine the informal networks of support, which involve friends, other families, and members of the community. Second, we need to study formal mechanisms of service delivery. Since there is growing interest in moving away from the delivery of services to families through an intervening network of institutions and bureaucracies, toward a more direct system of income support, it is especially important to examine the formal delivery systems as they now exist. Third, attention should be given in our research efforts to private and voluntary organizations which

provide services and support to families, such as Parents Without Partners.

At this point, Dr. Datta asked the resource persons who were present for their final comments. Dr. Steiner expressed a feeling of unease about the afternoon's discussion. Most of the comments, he suggested, could be boiled down to the premise that children are likely to do better in the long run if they are in families that provide affection, economic support, good care, etc., than if they are in families that do not provide such things. What he failed to hear in this discussion, however, were the researchable questions that would advance us beyond the knowledge that it is disastrous to be helpless and unloved.

Dr. Moles identified two areas of research in which he was particularly interested. The first concerned maternal employment. He urged more research on the intervening variables, such as the mother's level of interest in her work, which might relate to the effects of maternal employment on child outcome measures. Such research might help us sort out the contradictory findings of previous studies. Dr. Moles suggested that another important research issue is the role of television in family life.

Dr. Pearl also urged expanded research on the effects of television, with special attention to the aspects of family life with which television viewing interferes. What is it that television prevents? He pointed out that the problem is not restricted to children's viewing, but also involves viewing by the parents. Dr. Pearl advocated more research on the family as a system, rather than as a set of dyads. In particular, we need research which examines the extent to which a family member's behavior is a consequence of particular characteristics or traits of that person, or is a consequence of the person's relationships with other family members and role within the family. Finally, Dr. Pearl stressed the need for collaborative and cooperative research which would yield more valid data on a variety of family and child development processes.

Dr. Hamburg observed that we have identified arenas of special concern, and now have to pinpoint the major risks for children within these arenas. If none or only one of these risks applies to a child, there will probably not be a problem. If several or many of the risks apply, problems are likely

to occur. We have to develop methods to assess and follow up on such risks within the various arenas.

Dr. Gordon used the issue of developmental risks as a starting point for his own concluding comments. He is currently working on a project focusing on children who are "defiers of negative prediction"--children who have been successful despite very adverse conditions and circumstances. While his project concerns a child's educational performance, it also might be applied to family life. Why and how do some families overcome adversity and develop effective coping skills? Along similar lines, Dr. Gordon also discussed his interest in attribution theory, and the specific premise that one's perception of opportunity shapes the nature of one's involvement in a task. He speculated that the impact of poverty, or illness, or a handicap, or any kind of disadvantage, is influenced by the meaning people assign to it. A disadvantage holds some people down, but pushes others up. Perhaps investigators should study childrearing, and the use of day care and other social services, in the context of attribution theory, to see how people's use of resources is related to their perception of their circumstances.

Finally, Dr. Gordon suggested that research on child care and child development should give more attention to individual differences in temperament and cognitive style. He cited research which has suggested that "malfunctioning" in children in many cases actually may be a sign of a mismatch between the child's temperament and the temperament of the person caring for the child. He advised that when we establish policies and standards, we should be sensitive to such variations between individuals and situations. Policies and standards will have to adapt to such variations if we are to have effective outcomes.

Workgroup II. Information on Children and
Families--Needs and Resources

Chairpersons

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Resource Persons

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Paul Glick
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Lawrence D. Haber
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Genevieve Knezo
Science Policy Division,
Congressional Research
Service, Library of Congress

Mary Grace Kovar
National Center for Health
Statistics

Kristin Moore
Urban Institute

Mancur Olsen
Department of Economics,
University of Maryland

Nicholas Zill II
Foundation for Child Development

The workgroup's discussion moved from a review of existing data collection, access and coordination activities to an examination of several interrelated issues in these areas and ended with a compilation of a "wish list" of critical data needs which participants would like to see collected and analyzed. In general, the participants' comments touched on a few key recurring themes: ensuring access to data, improving the comparability of research through the standardization of format and theoretical perspective and determining the role of the Federal government in coordinating data collection and dissemination. The principal focus was on primary and secondary analyses of demographic and attitudinal survey data. Participants were also concerned with bibliographic, program, observational and other types of information.

Current Activities

The session began with a review of current activities in the Executive Branch and Congress. Under the Carter Administration reorganization, the statistical coordinating function of the Office of Management and Budget has been transferred to the new Office of Federal Statistical Policy and Standards in the Department of Commerce, an interagency statistical coordinating committee has been established, a national commission is developing new measures of employment and unemployment statistics, "urban indicators" are under development, and the first Standard Occupational Classification Manual has been published.

In Congress, the House Subcommittee on Census and Population is considering a bill to add sunset provisions to all Federal statistical authority every five years, establish a centralized computer data locator, require Congress to assess the data requirement implications of its legislative actions and set standards for data collection. Some of the participants were skeptical of the sunset provisions and "zero base data collection," fearing that agencies would spend every fifth year justifying the previous four years. Other participants viewed the bill as an attempt to reduce excess paperwork, ensure that data collection is related to policy making, and provide Congress with more information for its decision-making processes.

Ms. Knezo described current activities in the Congress to improve access to and use of information. A Congressional Clearinghouse on the Future has been established in response to a requirement that each House Committee provide Congress with information on future trends relevant to its jurisdiction and make five-year spending projections. Two bibliographic and statistical data bases have been created by this clearinghouse, which also provides technical assistance, training, referrals to futures researchers, projections from existing data series and publications. Both the Congressional Research Service and the Office of Technology Assessment have become interested in survey research in order to furnish Congress with information about the changing attitudes among the public on a variety of issues.

Access to Information

The discussion quickly focused on the issue of access to and coordination of data. The participants were in general agreement that access to existing and future data sets must be improved. Several operating access mechanisms were reviewed but all were found to be in only preliminary stages of development, lacking the desired extent of coverage or specificity. These included the National Technical Information Service, National Archives, Roper Center, Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, Dualabs, Census Bureau, and two information systems supported by the Interagency Panels, Interagency Research Information System (IRIS) and Information Retrieval and Analysis System (IRAS).

When all the desires of the participants were considered together, the ultimate in access was envisioned as a centralized archive or consortium of archives of data sets with facilities and staff for on-site use of data, a lending library and consultation services. Two data bases would be created: (1) a directory of all known data sets regardless of location, with names, addresses and phone numbers of key contact persons and detailed descriptions of the data; and (2) an index to all the individual items in the sets, so, for example, all questions on marital status in any of the sets could be identified quickly. These data bases would be available both on-line through remote terminals to researchers across the country and as a printed, updated looseleaf service.

Another aspect of data access of great concern to the discussants was the question of ownership and release of raw data. Some participants have experienced great difficulty in obtaining unpublished data from government-financed studies. In one case, a Federal employee writing a high-level annual report has been unable to incorporate data from a study conducted by another agency in her own department; in another case, a nongovernment researcher has been unsuccessful in her attempts to examine several-year-old data collected by a federally funded project at a private medical school.

Dr. Zill argued that a government-funded study is a national resource which should be immediately available to all through a data archive. He said, "When you talk about a large data base, you are talking about something like a telescope, a cyclotron . . . No individual owns Brookhaven or

Mt. Palomar. It is not for the exclusive use of one astronomer, and too much of the behavioral and social sciences . . . treat . . . data sets as private property." Several participants disagreed, citing the long-standing tradition of scientific freedom from government constraints, grant mechanisms which subsidize researchers and do not require a deliverable product and the intellectual property rights of researchers.

As a partial solution, the group favored giving non-Federal data collectors "first rights" to their data for a "reasonable" period of time, perhaps two years, after which the data would become part of the public domain. A similar practice had been in effect for several years at Federal statistical agencies; persons who purchased special tabulations received rights to exclusive use of the product for a specified period of time. However, under the new Freedom of Information Act, anyone who can specify the correct tabulations can request and receive at no charge a duplicate of work for which a previous researcher has been required to pay. Another solution was proposed by Dr. Zill; he favored expanding programs, such as the National Science Foundation's regular funding of the General Social Survey, in which Federal agencies fund large-scale, multi-purpose surveys and then make the data available quickly to all for further analysis.

According to the participants, there is a need to clarify provisions regarding ownership and release of data collected under various means of government funding. Data gathered by Federal agencies under legislative mandate or for policy or planning purposes, by Federal contractors, and by Federal grantees each present different issues of ownership, release, dissemination and "first rights." Knowledge and enforcement of any regulations in these areas would ensure access to all data collection efforts supported by government funding.

Data Comparability

The participants then examined several questions concerning the comparability of different data sets, particularly the standardization of format and the effect of theoretical perspective on data collection and presentation.

Much concern was voiced over the lack of standardization in survey instruments and the subsequent lack of comparability of data from different studies. For example, basic demographic data such as age and race are not always asked for in precisely the same way, making it difficult for policy-makers to draw conclusions about specific population groups or conduct extensive analyses with multiple variables. Record linkage, both within longitudinal data sets and across different data sets, was recommended, as was uniform formatting of material stored on computer tapes.

Several methods of alleviating this problem were proposed. Some participants believed the Federal government, in particular the Census Bureau, should take a stronger leadership role, but others objected that this was not appropriate for legal and political reasons. The Census Bureau is restricted by law to gathering information on matters of direct policy relevance within current privacy and confidentiality regulations, and thus does not ask questions about such personal items as religion or abortion. The OFSPS, through its clearance procedures, does enforce some requirements for standardization of race and ethnic categories and attempts to enforce uniformity in occupational and education questions. There was some concern that if extensive standardization requirements were implemented through Federal legislation, the process would become inflexible and preclude innovation.

Other suggested methods of increasing comparability were the compilation of an item pool, publication of basic background items for surveys, and definition of a minimum basic data set. Federal funding of non-Federal contractors was proposed as a means for gathering information which the Federal government does not.

The participants also discussed the effect of differing theoretical perspectives on the structure of surveys. Some participants were dissatisfied with the Census because it is a household survey from which family data can be extracted only with some difficulty. They argued that the family should be the unit of focus. Other participants were more interested in looking at the individuals, particularly the children, who comprise the family. Not resolved was the question of whether it is possible to separate the health and well-being of children from that of the family or

to advance the health and well-being of children and the family unit mutually and simultaneously.

Dr. Olsen presented a view of the family as a unit of the larger economy, with a measurable household production function, or an ability to produce valuable goods and services such as laundry and meal preparation. He saw an economic relationship between family arrangements and the policy concerns of poverty, disease and crime. His research shows that a dynamic, growing economy leads to increased geographical and social mobility and many broken family ties. His advocacy of measures to increase employment through labor intensive production, abolishing the minimum wage, and other economic incentives met with enthusiasm from many participants.

Ms. Kelly raised the issue of biased research assumptions which regard the behavior of ethnic and racial minorities as pathological. The group agreed that these assumptions had adversely affected the objective collection and presentation of data in the past but that increased awareness on the part of researchers had gone a long way toward remedying the situation in recent years.

There was also some discussion on the definitional problems posed in such areas as learning disabilities. Dr. Haber pointed out that the identification of children's performance levels is often tied to their social class, so that at a certain below-average level the poor and minority children are more likely to be classified as slow learners or mentally retarded while the middle-class and white children are more likely to be diagnosed as having specific learning disabilities. This differential labeling was regarded by Dr. Zill as having serious "policy implications because there are enormous differences in the amount of money that the government will spend depending on what kids are or are not considered handicapped." Dr. Kovar suggested that collecting information about children from both their parents and teachers could be advantageous for making proper diagnoses in these circumstances.

Responsibilities for Data Linkage and User Services

While the participants were unanimous in their desire for improved coordination of data collection and access, they did not agree on who

should assume responsibility for this function. The private researchers, notably Dr. Estrada, Dr. Zill and Dr. Moore, favored an expanded Federal role in the funding and coordination of data collection and dissemination.

Dr. Haber was opposed to this for several reasons. Many agencies are seriously understaffed and unable to respond in detail to public inquiries. Federal agencies operate under many contracting and other restrictions, the implementation of which can lead to incomplete, inappropriate or inflexible standards. Often there are many purposes to be served by coordination, with only a minor Federal interest.

Dr. Haber suggested that coordination should be a private initiative with some Federal guidance and funding. He favored informal, voluntary efforts by universities, professional associations and other private groups to form consortia and develop recommended rather than required standards. He also saw the university institutional review boards as important means of achieving comparability and objectivity.

An issue not touched on in the area of coordination was the need to develop more extensive links between data producers and data users. Many data users, especially those outside the Federal government, are apparently unaware of the numerous personnel, contracting and other legislative restrictions on the operations of Federal agencies. The original legislative purpose of many data collection efforts such as the Census has become obscured by the massive size of the undertaking and the volume of the output. The Federal government is seen by some as not only the largest but also the only possible collector of data, regardless of the degree of Federal interest in the results. At the same time, the data that are collected are not always the most useful for current policymaking purposes. It appears that data collectors and users could profit from an ongoing dialogue at many levels and at many stages, from planning and design to collection and dissemination.

Critical Data Needs

During the last third of the session, each participant was given an opportunity to state her or his own critical data needs, or "wish list." These "wishes" led to more discussions on data collection and coordination and, in some cases, answers to the participants' needs.

Dr. Hubbell, of the Family Impact Seminar, would like a large-scale survey to examine how families use different government support programs such as food stamps and health screening. Ms. Agers, of the Office of Human Development, wanted data on target populations and general client characteristics for programs on child abuse, day care, Head Start, developmental disabilities and runaway youth. Dr. Moore, of the Urban Institute, needed information on specific variables such as the extended family network, dual job family, wanted status of children, and male attitudes toward family planning.

Dr. Glick, of the Census Bureau, would like Census to conduct more extensive analyses of topics such as the link between children's educational progress and the socioeconomic characteristics of their neighborhoods, the extended family network, alimony and child support, and the relationship between divorce and the number of children involved. Ms. Dennis, of the Social Research Group, was concerned with inexpensive and convenient access to existing data.

Dr. Kovar, of the National Center for Health Statistics, expressed a preference for focusing on children (rather than families) in the context of their families, schools and neighborhoods. She also would like the conceptualization and measurement of the health and well-being of children to include physical, psychological, intellectual and social aspects, and for resources for Federal health programs to be allocated in relation to this expanded conceptualization.

Dr. Haber, of the Office of Federal Statistical Policy and Standards, was interested in family development history and the link between parents' and schools' perceptions of children's performance and abilities. Dr. Zill, of the Foundation for Child Development, would like to use a multivariate model to predict children's well-being, with the available imperfect measures of children's current status; he suspected that the variables currently receiving much attention, such as teenage pregnancy, are not in themselves as bad predictors as expected. He also stressed the need to develop better techniques for observing and measuring family behavior.

Ms. Kelly, of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, wanted more data on all aspects of families, better research designs for different target

populations, and the creation of a centralized bureau for information on each specific population. Ms. Shaw, of the National Institute of Neurological and Communicative Disorders and Stroke, wanted updated data on obesity as measured by fat folds, and maturation as measured by longitudinal hand x-rays.

Ms. Piovia, of the National Urban League, was interested in more local area data and research free from stereotypes and value judgments about black populations. Dr. O'Keefe, of the Administration for Children, Youth and Families, would like to see more normative data relating to the effects of television on cognitive development, and research on the relationships between family support systems and increased income.

In addition, there was general agreement among the participants that a major ongoing study of families was needed, perhaps in conjunction with the White House Conference on Families. Other critical data needs and issues mentioned during the afternoon concerned peer groups, multiple and integrated sources of information, black adolescents' drug use, literature reviews, cross-cultural analyses, examination of unanalyzed research, connections between family economic productivity and government policy, labor intensive production, children's behavior and psychological problems, and research designs allowing causal inferences.

Workgroup III. Current Methods and
Approaches in Child Development

Chairpersons

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Administration for Children, Youth, and Families

Bernard Brown
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Resource Persons

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Paul Doeckel
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Susan Doering
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Joseph Drage
National Institute of Neurological
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Allan J. Lichtman
Department of History
American University

Virginia Shipman
Educational Testing Service

Irving Sigel
Educational Testing Service

Dr. Brown began the workgroup session by reviewing the charge to the participants, as set out in the agenda: to consider methodological innovations and needs in a number of representative areas of research on children and families. For instance, how can a broader array of disciplines and approaches be applied to child development research? What are some of the most serious methodological problems in research today? What are some of the most promising methods? What are the implications of these methodological developments for the research programs and plans of the different Federal agencies? How can agencies best contribute to methodological advances in research on children and families?

Resource persons were asked for opening comments. Dr. Darlington called attention to a problem with which he has been involved, and which is likely to arise more frequently in the future: How do you re-analyze and integrate data from a number of independent studies, which originally incorporated different approaches,

methods, analytical techniques, etc.? When you put together a dozen different studies, how do you determine that a composite finding is statistically significant? Dr. Darlington and his associates have been trying to develop solutions to such problems.

Dr. Dokecki suggested that one of the great challenges facing researchers today is to deal with the complexity of the family environment. Too many investigators rely on questionnaires, which cannot alone assess the complexities of family relations and functioning. Another substantial problem is the lack of theory in much of the research on children and families. Too frequently, data gathering appears to be undertaken without concern for theory, and in hope that something interesting will turn up. Similarly, it is often difficult to understand the relationship between a particular operational definition and the concept that underlies it. Consequently, we end up with a substantial amount of data from which we are unable to draw any clear and useful conclusions.

Turning to priorities, Dr. Dokecki urged the development of methods that do justice to transactional approaches to child development and the family. Acknowledging the value of many of the analytic techniques now available, he advised that methods of gathering and analyzing data have to be developed which are better suited to investigations of complex interactions between three or more family members. More attention also should go to the structures which mediate the family's interaction with society, such as kinship systems, neighborhood organizations, churches, and voluntary organizations. Again, however, methodological developments are needed. We are having a conceptual breakthrough in studying the child and family, but few investigators are building methods to operationalize this conceptualization. Dr. Dokecki also stressed the need for a multifaceted methodology for evaluation research.

Finally, Dr. Dokecki pointed out that behavioral scientists frequently ignore the history of their own disciplines, fail to take advantage of earlier work, and end up arguing about the same issues time and time again. More support should be given to historical studies, and especially to integrating historical data with current social science data.

Dr. Doering seconded Dr. Dokecki's suggestions, and observed that considerable progress has been made in doing in-depth research on families. Such studies may incorporate methods from many disciplines, however, such as

sociology, psychology, medicine, and biology, and require that a large sample be selected, and a large number of variables be measured. This presents real problems for the average investigator with limited funds.

Dr. Drage added that longitudinal research often is required to learn about the specific processes and factors which contribute to various developmental outcomes, but it too is exceedingly expensive, especially if many variables are being followed.

One of the participants commented on the need, in transactional research, to identify new variables which are relevant to transactions among a number of family members. Our theories traditionally have been focused on individuals or dyads, and consequently if we start with the variables suggested by those theories, we are likely to miss the critical factors in multi-person situations. Relevant variables can only be selected through careful observation and description of family transactions.

Dr. Sigel also stressed the importance of developing a sound conceptual system; in order to do a good path analysis you have to have a good conceptual framework, and define the key variables in advance. In addition, we have to expect that research on complex family systems will take a long time. Interactions between many variables have been found, such as sex of parent, sex of child, age of parent, age of child, and type of task involved, and they must be carefully examined and sorted out.

Along similar lines, Dr. Lazar observed that in studying the family as a system, we need to develop methods that assess the products of interaction, rather than the characteristics of the interacting parts. We need concepts and methods that actually address the family as a dynamic system. The family has a life history and goes through different stages. It requires that certain roles be played, not necessarily by any one person, or even the same person over time. It needs to adapt to various kinds of settings. These are the aspects of the family--not the individual components--that have to be addressed by our methods. One of the participants responded that it is very difficult to obtain support for pure methodological work.

The participants discussed the role of philosophy in research on children and families. The primary conclusion was that researchers must be conscious of and examine the axiological, epistemological, and logical perspectives which underlie their research approaches. They must be careful

that they do not allow their own values and logical systems to distort the nature of the phenomena which they are studying. For instance, researchers frequently conceptualize issues in terms of dichotomies, and construct deficit models to explain complex variations in the ways children and families function.

Dr. Lichtman discussed contributions which the historical perspective could make to research on child development and the family. He seconded the premise that research must be guided by theory, but cautioned that theories are not necessarily time-independent. As conditions change over time, modifications in our theories may be required. We should try to see how our theories hold up with regard to data and information from the past, as well as the present, in order to learn more about the impact of different circumstances on the phenomena being studied. The use of historical data presents serious methodological problems for the researcher. Historical information tends to be fragmentary and incomplete, it is often difficult to judge the reliability of the information, and, of course, past events cannot be experimentally manipulated. Traditional literary sources may be relevant to child research, such as court records, diaries, letters, and family and child care manuals. In addition, oral history, obtained through interviews with people about their own experiences and memories, may be useful to social scientists, although it raises other methodological and ethical questions.

Dr. Lichtman pointed out the parallel between the problem of statistically analyzing a composite of independent research studies, and the task of integrating information collected from diverse historical sources, which may differ in reliability, methodology, etc. It is difficult to determine the comparability of historical case studies. How does one synthesize information from case studies done by historians who held different value systems, used different methods, and asked different questions?

Finally, Dr. Lichtman observed that as we try to quantify historical information, we are faced with a problem which pervades all of the social sciences. Those phenomena which are easiest to quantify and measure receive most of the attention, and the more intangible and subjective phenomena are ignored. This last remark prompted a discussion among many of the participants about the issue of quantifying phenomena. On the one hand, it was agreed that researchers

should not function as technicians, measuring variables and collecting data without sufficient regard for the conceptual bases of their studies. On the other hand, participants cautioned that quantification per se should not be attacked, but rather simplistic quantification. Measures and numbers are merely symbols for other things; the important issue is how those symbols are chosen, and how they are used. The challenge is to translate the qualitative into the quantitative without losing the essence of the qualitative.

Dr. Shipman turned to the issue of methodological innovations in research on children and families. Acknowledging that we should always be on the lookout for useful innovations, she contended that many researchers are too quick to adopt innovative methods which they then use simplistically and inappropriately. In borrowing a "new" method from other researchers, one must take care to learn about the limitations of the method and the ways in which it should and should not be used. Some researchers are apt to substitute new methods for old methods, rather than supplement the old with the new. The latter course generally is more sensible, since rarely do different methods and measures tap the same variables or generate the same kinds of data. Furthermore, if a method has not proven to be useful in the past, before we abandon it we should try to determine how it could be used more effectively. Dr. Shipman observed that this process of refining and improving methods would be much easier if there were a better system for sharing information across studies. Dr. Drage added that we particularly need more information about studies which fail to produce positive results. Negative results are rarely reported at meetings or in the literature; yet we could learn a great deal by examining the circumstances under which positive results fail to appear.

Dr. Darlington returned to the problem of trying to obtain extensive information about a sample of subjects, when the researcher's funds are limited. He suggested that several researchers collaborate, and use the same sample for their different projects. Through such collaboration, the size of the sample could be increased, and much richer information about the sample could be obtained. He pointed out that the standard error of a regression coefficient is primarily a function of the difference between the number of subjects and the number of variables, which means that when you raise the size of the sample from 125 subjects to 500 subjects, you substantially increase the scope

of the information that can be obtained. Dr. Darlington went on to review a few other problems which faced the Developmental Continuity Consortium. While the aggregate of studies involved in the Consortium effort provided a large number of subjects, the children could not be treated individually in most of the statistical analyses since they had been grouped in various kinds of educational programs. Thus, for many of the analyses, the size of the n was no greater than two dozen. Dr. Darlington pointed out, however, that since each of the observations represented an aggregate of many children, the resultant stability of the observations provided considerable statistical power. Significant correlations as high as .8 have been obtained in analyzing these data. Dr. Darlington also indicated that he and his associates have made extensive efforts to correct for their post hoc selection of significant results from the large number of tests carried out in the Consortium's study.

In addition to statistical problems, many procedural problems arise when a number of studies are combined and the data re-analyzed years after they were collected. Dr. Darlington advised that the secondary analysts had to try hard to maintain good relationships with the original investigators. When large amounts of data are reanalyzed, it is likely that some discrepancies will be found between the original results and the results of the secondary analyses.

In combining and reanalyzing independent studies, it may turn out that the most useful data are not those that were given highest priority by the original investigators. Only those measures common to a number of the studies can be examined effectively, although these measures may not be ones which we would select if we were starting de novo. Furthermore, our theories, methods, and research and policy interests change with time, and the old data may not address new questions and perspectives. Dr. Sigel observed that this is a critical problem for all longitudinal studies--how to collect data that will be useful and relevant years hence. Dr. Lazar suggested that it might be possible to conduct a longitudinal study in which a small group of new subjects could be incorporated each year, so that measures could be updated continuously. In that way, new questions could be addressed, but at the same time there would be a common base of data over time.

Dr. Shipman commented on the importance of treating children, families, and teachers as partners in research, rather than as just subjects to be studied. If researchers are honest with the people, schools, and institutions in the community where the research is being undertaken, and make efforts to inform them completely about the purposes and methods of research, later follow-up research will be easier and more successful, either as part of a longitudinal study or a secondary analysis.

The participants then briefly discussed the need for a system by which investigators working in the same research areas could find out about each other, especially during the early stages of their research when they are developing their design, methods, and measures. The participants were reminded that the Interagency Research Information System can provide abstracts and the names and addresses of the principal investigators of ongoing Federally-funded research projects on children and adolescents. Several participants urged more support for conferences and other modes of collaboration between investigators working on similar problems.

The resource persons were asked at this point for their concluding remarks. Dr. Darlington predicted that secondary analyses and syntheses of independent studies will be carried out more frequently in the future, but that researchers are not widely knowledgeable about the statistical methods which can be applied to such efforts. He pointed out that at least three options--combining all of the subjects into one sample, aggregating the significance levels of the studies, and treating the project or site as the unit of analysis--can be used in different kinds of analyses. The data analysis team has to use a variety of different statistical approaches for different sets of questions. Yet the appropriate use of such methods is rarely covered in textbooks or graduate courses on statistics. Dr. Darlington is currently working on a methodological paper which will focus on the re-analysis of independent research studies.

Dr. Doeckel again stressed the need for more adequate conceptual models of child development within the family and the broader environment. We need to work on more dynamic, transactional concepts of the processes of human development. Dr. Doeckel asked if there were some ways in which agencies could encourage more directly the development of such concepts and the methods necessary to carry out research on them.

Dr. Doering returned to the issue of coordination and collaboration among researchers. She pointed out that the need to exchange information is especially great among researchers who are trying to apply a broad array of disciplines and approaches to their research--the problem is how to keep up with the latest developments in all of the many fields which may bear on a research issue. Federal support for information systems, conferences, and collaborative efforts may be part of the answer.

Dr. Drage seconded the suggestion that we give increased support to cross-disciplinary research on children and families, and make greater efforts to bring in economists, educators, nutritionists, and sociologists, and other kinds of researchers who can contribute to our understanding of the child's ecology. He also observed that we need to find effective ways to obtain the information we need without having to rely on longitudinal methods, which simply take too long. We also need better techniques to judge the degree to which we can generalize and predict from a particular set of data. Finally, we should strive for a balance between large-scale general data gathering studies, and more precisely focused, explanatory studies.

Dr. Lichtman reviewed some issues relating to the role of historical and philosophical approaches in child development research. He advised that if Federal agencies are going to increase the involvement of these approaches in research on children and families, they will have to be willing to fund different modes of inquiry than those traditionally favored. For instance, historians do not generally begin their research with specific hypotheses.

Dr. Lichtman raised questions about how we select our research areas and priorities. He cautioned against giving too much attention to issues that are dramatic but momentary, instead of focusing on issues which will be relevant over the long term. Rather than focus on the problems of the day, we should look for the issues that underlie problems from one period to another. He urged more reflective research. For instance, agencies could examine their own histories, to determine how their research agenda and priorities had evolved. How and why did certain issues and approaches come to be favored? In the same way, social scientists could make a greater effort to examine the development of their disciplines and methodologies. Dr. Lichtman suggested that we now spend most of our time trying to answer questions,

and that we could profit from spending more time examining and refining the questions themselves. Finally, he advocated a much more comprehensive evaluation of research than has been customary. When we evaluate the quality of a research project, we tend to look at relatively few dimensions of the research, such as the reliability of the measures or the soundness of the methodology. In addition, we should examine the values and assumptions on which the research is based and the general meaning of the findings in the context of the particular philosophical framework of the research.

Dr. Shipman emphasized the need for researchers to draw their concepts and methods from more than one discipline, and to share their ideas with each other, and build on each other's studies. Dr. Grotberg pointed out that her agency has made efforts to bring together researchers working in a specific area, to share information about methodological problems and to look for ways to increase comparability in their measures and methods. Such cooperative exchanges could be taken even further, and used to develop specific cluster analyses. Dr. Sigel suggested that it would be beneficial to bring together researchers working on the same problem even earlier, before they begin writing their proposals. Most of us are still not willing to incorporate multiple perspectives in our research methods and conceptualizations. If researchers with different perspectives can get together and exchange ideas before their research approaches and designs are locked in, they might be more likely to select methods which are most appropriate for their objectives rather than just those methods with which they happen to be familiar or comfortable. Dr. Sigel also argued that interdisciplinary research should amount to more than just a collection of separate contributions from researchers in a number of disciplines. To be truly interdisciplinary, the research should represent a synthesis of perspectives from different disciplines, resulting in a new collective perspective. Finally, he cautioned that we not let specific methodologies dictate our research questions, but rather that we use our questions as guides for selecting our methods. A research team should not undertake a factor analysis, for instance, simply because an expert in factor analysis is on the staff.

The workgroup session concluded with comments by Dr. Lazar concerning the process of planning and funding research and evaluation projects. He recommended that agencies give more attention to research and evaluation needs

when they plan and initiate programs, and begin with good baseline data and random controls. He also urged that longer response times be incorporated into RFPs, or that awards be made for proposal development, so that researchers have the chance to think through their methods and designs more carefully and completely.

Finally, Dr. Lazar advocated a closer and longer lasting relationship between the researcher and an expert review panel. After the award for the research has been made, the review panel could continue to function as a technical assistance group, and work with the investigator all the way through the course of the research project.

Tuesday Morning Plenary Session

Moderator: Harold C. Wallach

Summaries of the three Monday afternoon workgroup discussions were presented by George Coelho (Workgroup I), Harold Wallach and Ruth Hubbell (Workgroup II), and Edith Grotberg and Bernard Brown (Workgroup III).

The report on Workgroup I was delivered first. Following Dr. Coelho's presentation, Dr. Lichtman suggested that another issue which would be of major importance in the future is the impact on human development of genetic engineering and other forms of biological manipulation. Biological engineering raises a multitude of moral, legal, ethical, philosophical, and historical questions.

The summary of Workgroup II was followed by a brief discussion of the use of historical data in research on children and families. It was suggested that there are valuable historical sources of information, such as court records, and records of insurance companies, which could be used to learn more about changes in family structure, the relationship between economic factors and family life, etc. One participant cautioned, however, that the validity of such data had to be evaluated very carefully before any conclusions were based on them. In particular, the researcher has to be wary of conclusions based on the absence of information about specific factors in historical records. The information may be missing not because the factors were absent, but because the information was not considered relevant by the record-keepers at that time in history. For instance, hospital records concerning mental health and illness have changed considerably over the years.

Another participant pointed out that researchers often can draw on studies in other areas and fields, which collected data relevant to a variety of issues other than those for which the studies were originally designed. For instance, in one agency an economist who was studying the net value of work in the home kept careful records of how mothers spent their time. These data could be used by other researchers for other purposes, such as studying the relationship between the ways in which mothers interacted with their children, and school achievement, or the use of community services. We need

to include more details about the characteristics of studies and their samples in our computerized information systems, so that researchers can identify data collected by other researchers that are relevant to their own interests.

During her summary of Workgroup III, Dr. Grotberg related Dr. Sigel's advice that we ought to try to go beyond our own particular theoretical orientations, and "listen to other conceptual systems." This prompted a lengthy discussion of interdisciplinary research. Dr. Gordon called attention to a suggestion made by Donald Hebb in a 1973 lecture at the APA meetings, that the behavioral sciences contribute to our understanding of status and mechanism issues, but do not contribute much to meaning. We need to try to integrate the behavioral sciences and the humanities in order to make better progress in that area. In addition, Dr. Gordon advocated an upgrading of the literature review required for research proposals. The current knowledge base in the area of concern should be more carefully assessed, and it should be examined more completely in light of new hypotheses. In many proposals, this task is treated too routinely, and no real effort is made to analyze and synthesize previous knowledge.

Participants agreed that it was hard to find examples of interdisciplinary work, and that, in order for researchers to communicate effectively across disciplines, they have to make a great effort to do so. Some of the agencies, such as NSF, have provided funds for conferences which bring together researchers from different disciplines. One of the participants contended, however, that interdisciplinary collaboration requires a great deal of preparation, and that one-shot conferences are not likely to be successful. It is more effective to plan a series of meetings, each of which can build on the preceding work. It takes time for researchers to learn about other frames of reference, and to establish common grounds for communication. Unfortunately, a series of conferences is very expensive.

Dr. Lazar argued that if agencies want to improve multidisciplinary research, or problem-centered research not tied to a particular discipline or methodology, they will have to make changes in their training grants, as well as in their research grants. Most training grant funds now are limited to single disciplines or traditional training approaches.

Dr. Dillon commented on the success of the 1976 and 1977 Smithsonian conferences on "Kin and Communities," but pointed out that even the title of a conference can affect the willingness of the participants to communicate, since most scientists are not willing to speak to issues outside of their field or terminology.

Dr. Hubbell observed that the Family Impact Seminar has effectively combined sociologists, psychologists, lawyers, historians and physicians. She suggested that the flexibility of the funding institutions involved in the effort had enabled the seminar to integrate contributions from this variety of professionals.

Dr. Coelho pointed out that, despite the difficulties and obstacles, coalitions and communication across disciplines had occurred over the years, although the process usually was slow and subtle, and took place not in forced situations, but along natural cutting edges. One of the participants said that, in some cases in the past, recommendations generated by well-planned, broad-based conferences have had substantial impact on agency planning and funding decisions.

Dr. Dillon raised another question: How do we determine what contributions children make to the society in which they live? One of the objectives of the International Year of the Child is to raise consciousness about the contributions of children. Dr. Zill responded that we should ask the children. He argued that our research has not included enough interviewing of children and families, and that consequently many theories are out of touch with reality. Rather than listen to other conceptual systems, we should be listening to children.

At this point in the plenary session, resource persons were asked for their concluding remarks. Dr. Pearl called for a careful re-examination of our knowledge base in the field of child development. Many of the premises and conclusions which have been handed down over the years have never been challenged or thoroughly examined, and they may have been based originally on inadequate data. In addition, he urged that we pursue more vigorously collaborative research and efforts to increase comparability in research. While there has been increasing talk about such efforts in recent years, progress has not been as fast as many of us had hoped.

Dr. Gordon suggested that we need to supplement new research endeavors with better use of the present knowledge base. Before we undertake new research to answer a particular question, we should analyze and synthesize data which have already been collected, and which may have relevance to the new question. He also suggested that more attention be given to the debate concerning the adequacy of available analytical and methodological techniques for transactional research. On the one hand, it is probably the case that many researchers are not making optimal use of available statistical techniques in their efforts to study complex ecological situations. On the other hand, even the best techniques probably are not suited to the study of the complex interactions and multiple-variable situations in which researchers increasingly are becoming interested.

Dr. Hamburg contended that we need to undertake longitudinal studies, which will be long term and expensive, but at the same time, support research which incorporates new statistical techniques which also can provide meaningful results in shorter lengths of time. She urged agencies to give more attention to negative results, and pointed out that our understanding of sex differences had been distorted by the tendency to report only positive results. Finally, she seconded earlier recommendations for interdisciplinary conferences, but suggested that representatives of foundations be included in such efforts.

Dr. Zill stated that the important questions concerning children and families were not going to be answered by a plethora of small studies using a diversity of methods. We need better instruments, larger samples, and multiple measures, even though such large-scale research will be expensive. Dr. Zill observed that many of the most exciting variables, such as those relating to abortion and religion, are excluded from the Census Bureau's data collection, so that efforts along those lines will have to be undertaken in the private sector. We need to combine a number of methods in our studies, such as interviews with children, and observational measures in cases where self-report is questionable. Dr. Zill stressed the need to develop non-cognitive measures. In particular, we need to develop quantitative measures of moral, social, and emotional development in children, which will be able to compete with the quantitative cognitive tests that now have disproportional impact on policy makers. Finally, he advocated increased support for secondary

analyses of large, available data bases, such as the Collaborative Perinatal Study and the British longitudinal studies.

Dr. Drage observed that we have made a good start in research on the basic needs of infants and children, relating to nutrition, shelter, clothing, etc., and have made progress in research on the complex development of the higher-order cognitive processes, although it is difficult to measure cognitive variables and interpret our data. We have not made much headway, however, in studying the development of attitudes and values, and the ways in which people perceive and think about the important factors in their lives, all of which shape the ways in which children eventually function.

Dr. Hubbell urged that researchers be more sensitive to ethnic and minority groups when they are developing research questions and planning research, and that they look at family strengths rather than apply the traditional deficit models. We also need to develop innovative methods for field studies and program evaluations, which will be able to control for some of the variability with which we are faced in the real world.

Dr. Lichtman's comments covered a number of points. First, responding to the considerable discussion of the importance of theory-guided research, Dr. Lichtman argued that theories operate under specific conditions, and that we should test our theories under different conditions. Specifically, history could serve as a useful "laboratory" for testing theories. We need to expand our conception of longitudinal studies by going back into history for relevant data. Dr. Lichtman reviewed several sources of historical data: 1) literary or traditional historical records, such as diaries, letters, fiction, advice manuals, and court records; and 2) oral history, which is now a well-established discipline.

Dr. Lichtman advocated changes in three aspects of research: 1) doing research; 2) evaluating research; and 3) synthesizing research. With regard to doing research, he suggested that we need to move away from problem-oriented research, toward theme- or idea-oriented research. Broad themes, such as the family and the state, or the family and institutions, which are not tied to particular problems, can be examined. He proposed that agencies hold question competitions, where researchers would be given awards for the most interesting and creative questions. Dr. Lichtman also recommended that agencies undertake

reflective research, examining the evolution of their own missions and priorities.

Dr. Lichtman called for a broadening of the way in which we evaluate research studies. Rather than restrict our attention to the design, statistical methods, data collection, etc., we should examine the values, assumptions, and perspectives underlying the research. Why were particular methods used? Why were questions asked the way they were? What are the limitations of particular perspectives?

Finally, Dr. Lichtman urged that we try to move beyond traditional kinds of interdisciplinary research on children (e.g., integrating sociology, psychology, and biology), and synthesize a much broader array of disciplines and modes of inquiry. In addressing children's issues, we should try to bring to bear such diverse approaches as the social sciences, history, the humanities, and philosophy. There are serious problems which must be resolved in synthesizing these different approaches. For instance, unlike psychologists, historians rarely begin their research with hypotheses, and tend to be more intuitive. Even fiction has a role to play in our efforts to answer questions pertaining to children and families, and it is particularly important with respect to futures studies.

Dr. Dillon announced that the Smithsonian Institution is preparing to observe the centennial of the birth of Albert Einstein, and is particularly interested in three research questions: 1) How are play, wonder, and problem solving related? 2) Are art and science products of the play impulse in mammals? 3) How can curiosity be maintained longer during a lifetime? He also expressed personal interest in research on how children learn about reciprocity. Why are many adults in our society unwilling to ask for help or advice from others?

Dr. Doering returned to the topic of interdisciplinary research, and recommended that all researchers try to expand their perspectives beyond their own particular discipline. She contended that every researcher is capable of undertaking interdisciplinary research, since entire fields do not have to be mastered, only those sub-areas relevant to particular research problems.

Responding to the interest which participants had expressed in lists of data sources, Dr. Darlington pointed out two resources that could be used by

researchers: 1) Guide to Resources and Services, 1976-1977, prepared by the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, at the University of Michigan; 2) Directory of Data Bases in the Social and Behavioral Sciences, by Vivian S. Sessions (N.Y.: Science Associates/International, Inc., 1974).

Dr. Darlington agreed with previous comments by resource persons that there is a need for large-scale longitudinal studies. He argued that other research approaches are useful in obtaining certain kinds of information, but there is no substitute for good longitudinal research. He emphasized that an increase in the size of the sample means a dramatic increase in the amount of data generated. Thus, the extra funds required for a large sample can have a substantial pay-off in information obtained. Dr. Darlington also suggested that researchers undertake clinical case studies in conjunction with their quantitative, experimental studies. These non-quantitative projects can provide rich information which can be used in various ways at later points in time, as new questions are raised.

Dr. Doeckel argued that there is too little theory-derived research, and urged that researchers be more explicit about their theories and concepts. He listed six specific issues which should receive more attention from researchers: 1) the development of families through different life cycles; 2) intrafamily systems, and the family as a system interacting with societal systems; 3) social structures and support systems that mediate between the individual and society, such as the family, the neighborhood, the church, and the voluntary agency; 4) the impact of stress on families, and coping mechanisms used by families; 5) the linkage between families and service delivery systems; 6) pluralism, and the achievement of societal goals through plural means.

Dr. Moles was the last resource person to speak at the plenary session. He commented on the value of combining different methods, such as observation and unstructured interviewing, to obtain information which may in turn provide the base for structured surveys and large-scale studies. He also stressed the importance of examining, at different points in the course of a research project, the underlying theoretical concepts, and trying to determine how they relate to other theoretical approaches. He recommended that more effort go

into compiling directories of existing sets of data, so that researchers can identify and have access to other data relevant to their own concerns. Finally, he suggested that we need to define some specific topics within the broad areas identified during the conference. For instance, why do working-class children progress better in school when they live in middle-class neighborhoods than when they live in working-class neighborhoods? There are many different directions in which research on this question can move. We need to identify the next steps for research in this and other specific areas relating to children and families.

Appendix

Participants in the Conference on
Child Development within the Family--Evolving New Research Approaches

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